



Chris Geronis, R.Ph.
Gateway Apothecary

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5 Tips for Pharmacies to Support Patients Managing HIV

More than 1.1 million Americans are living with HIV, and the Center for Disease Control estimates 50,000 new cases of HIV each year. Fortunately, drug therapies to suppress the virus have greatly improved. Many studies have shown that with a near-perfect adherence rate, the viral load in HIV patients is almost undetectable and patients with HIV can lead long, healthy lives.

A near-perfect adherence rate of 95 percent or higher is very difficult for most patients to maintain under the best circumstances. The fear of discrimination, socioeconomic challenges and denial or hopelessness that can accompany an HIV diagnosis make such a high adherence rate even harder to achieve.

Our pharmacies have served HIV patients in St. Louis since the 1990s and have become part of patients' support network.

Here are a few lessons we've learned along the way:



Get Involved

Effectively serving HIV patients requires much more than stocking antiretroviral drugs and getting a certification. You have to get involved: understand each patient's social and financial situations; connect with case managers and care providers; supplement support networks. We start building relationships with patients when they are diagnosed, and we reach out each month to make sure patients are taking their medications and staying healthy.



Develop Partnerships in your Community

There are a number of clinics and non-profit organizations committed to serving HIV patients in the St. Louis area. Over the years, we have established close relationships with these groups. When we see a patient in need of medical attention, counseling, housing or food, we're able to connect him or her with someone who can help. Additionally, if our partners notice a patient struggling to manage medications, they often refer that patient to our pharmacy for support.



Play a Clinical Role

Pharmacists are experts in medication management and can help HIV patients lead healthier lives. Through collaborative practice agreements with local physicians, one of our clinical pharmacists meets with HIV patients weekly and provides physicians with recommendations for medication therapies. In this role, pharmacists offer a different perspective that's helpful to patients and their doctors.



Educate & Empower

The adherence rate required to successfully manage HIV is much higher than patients' average adherence rate for other chronic conditions. Socioeconomic challenges, the stigma around HIV and possible unpleasant side effects of the medications make a near-perfect adherence rate even harder to achieve. We continually educate patients about the importance of taking medication as prescribed, and we provide tools like adherence packaging to make it easier.



Help Coordinate Care

Our pharmacists are in almost constant communication with the physicians treating our HIV patients. We are currently developing a web portal that will allow physicians and other providers to see if a patient has picked up or refilled medications. By creating this two-way communication, we're helping coordinate care and positioning our partners and patients for success.

About Chris

Chris Geronis, R.Ph., owns and operates Gateway Apothecary and Beverly Hills Pharmacy in St. Louis, Mo. With three pharmacists certified by the American Academy of HIV Medicine, Gateway provides support and medications to nearly 400 HIV patients each month. They recently added Parata PASS strip packaging to their adherence program to make it easy for patients to manage medications and lead healthier lives.

Learn More about Parata PASS

Pharmacists across the country are using strip packaging to help improve patient adherence and outcomes and reduce health care costs. Want to know if Parata PASS strip packaging is right for your pharmacy? Contact us today at success@parata.com.

